

OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

SENATE BILL 762 BIANNUAL REPORT



JANUARY 2023





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The Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is required by statute to provide two reports annually to the Oregon Legislature, documenting work relating to Senate Bill 762, codified in June 2021 (ORS 476.398). The law codified wildfire prevention, community risk reduction, and proactive emergency response tools for the OSFM.

This report provides status and financial updates for the following OSFM responsibilities as required by Senate Bill 762, Section 10(2)(a)–(d):

- The status regarding community risk reduction and the establishment, administration, and enforcement of defensible space requirements.
- The amount of moneys expended during the year for community risk reduction and the establishment, administration, or enforcement of defensible space requirements.
- The amount of moneys expended during the year for the suppression of fires on wildland-urban interface lands.
- Any recommendations from the state fire marshal for legislative action, including, but not limited to, current or future resource and funding needs for community risk reduction and establishing, administering, or enforcing defensible space requirements.



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM



Oregon State Fire Marshal supports the Fire Adapted Oregon Initiative, which aims to improve community resiliency to wildfire in Oregon. The Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Unit staff provide local coordination, funding, education, and training to support the initiative. Additionally, the CRR Unit supports the OSFM's Community Risk Reduction Program by empowering wildfire community preparedness, fostering relationships to encourage local fire prevention and education capacity, and educating Oregonians on mitigating

their risk to life and property loss in the event of a wildfire.

Since the last report, our Fire Risk Reduction Specialists (FRRSs) have engaged regionally and hosted Assessing Structure Ignition Potential (ASIP) training courses throughout the state in seven counties. The CRR Unit staff assessed Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) in their districts to identify potential strategic community investments to support the Fire Adapted Oregon Initiative.

Highlights of their work include:

- Hosted seven ASIP courses in Deschutes, Union, Umatilla, Malheur, Jackson, Klamath, and Lane counties
- Awarded \$6,355 in scholarships for fire personnel to attend ASIP training
- Evaluated existing CWPPs across the state to identify community pilot project investments totaling \$1.67 million to be invested in the first quarter of 2023
- Funded two defensible space demonstration sites in Marion and Lane counties
- Piloted wildfire preparedness training for foster homes in Central Oregon
- Hosted or coordinated 158 community events, partner meetings, or trainings



Finally, OSFM launched a one-stop landing page for Oregonians to use as a springboard into all statewide programs related to Senate Bill 762. It's the first of its kind and will continue to evolve as additional educational resources and public programs become available.

 **LEARN MORE HERE**

OREGON DEFENSIBLE SPACE CODE AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Senate Bill 762 directed the OSFM to adopt a statewide minimum defensible space code for specific properties identified on the final wildfire risk map as high or extreme within the wildland-urban interface. The bill directed the OSFM to adopt the defensible space standards by December 2022.

OSFM continued to engage with the established Oregon Defensible Space Code Development Committee and formed the

Best Management Practices Focus Group. The Focus Group was tasked with creating recommendations for the pending defensible space code that would provide flexibility in practices Oregonians could take on their property. Additionally, to ensure that Oregonians had opportunities to give feedback on the code development, OSFM hosted 17 in-person and three (3) virtual town halls across Oregon to hear public input and answer questions about the code language and development process. During the town hall tour, 2,100 public members attended to provide feedback and express concerns. OSFM addressed their questions and integrated their input into the code and program development. The input received in the town hall meetings was vital in informing the code language and complementary education program.

A final risk map must be available before the defensible space standards are adopted as a code through a public rulemaking process. The final draft of the code language was established in December 2022 in alignment with the original statute. The code principles will be used as the educational standard throughout Oregon in 2023. The OSFM continues to bolster the complementary defensible space educational program to underpin the future defensible space code work. In addition, OSFM is working with partner agencies to finalize training, investment programs, education, resources, and technical support for landowners to prepare their properties for wildfires.



TOWN HALL LOCATIONS

LEARN MORE HERE



OSFM WILDFIRE GRANT PROGRAM

The OSFM designed and implemented six new grant programs with Senate Bill 762 funding in 2022. Each grant program was tailored to provide solutions to challenges identified in OSFM-hosted listening sessions with key partners, local government representatives, the Oregon fire service, and members of the public. These grant programs address key factors in supporting a more robust wildfire response and reducing wildfire risk to communities. The programs outlined below support OSFM's Response Ready Oregon and Fire Adapted Oregon initiatives, helping to keep fires small and prepare communities.

WILDFIRE SEASON FIREFIGHTING STAFFING GRANT

Key partners identified their staffing capacity as a key problem to address, especially during the peak fire season months. To boost capacity within the Oregon fire service, the OSFM awarded \$6 million in grants to 180 structural fire service agencies. The funding was used to hire an additional 1,598 firefighting staff during the 2022 wildfire season. The additional staff supported the initial response in their communities as well as regional and statewide mobilizations through the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System (OFMAS).

Local fire agencies across Oregon shared not only how they've been able to stop fires when they are small but how they responded to other calls as well. This one-time grant funding had a huge impact across the state. This funding boosted capacity within the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System. For the first time in several years, some local fire agencies had the resources to send to statewide assignments. More successes are detailed in a story map OSFM crafted with the help of Oregon's fire service. Learn more here:

[***Protecting Communities***](#)

"At one point this summer, we were able to have staff at a community event, respond to a statewide conflagration, and show our community we are still here to respond to their needs. It was great for our community to see." - Vernonia Fire District

ENGINE PROGRAM

In July 2022, the OSFM launched a \$25 million engine program for the Oregon fire service to address the need for more firefighting apparatus throughout the state. This program will provide apparatus for agencies who may not have the funds to purchase new equipment or have the correct type of apparatus to address the growing wildfire risk to their communities. Approximately 70 apparatus will be strategically placed within the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System around the state to help fire agencies keep fires small and away from communities. Applications were accepted until October 31, 2022, and are in the final review phase at the time of this report.

OSFM WILDFIRE GRANT PROGRAM, CONTINUED

DEFENSIBLE SPACE INCENTIVE GRANT

To help prepare vital infrastructure in communities for wildfire, the OSFM launched a Defensible Space Incentive (DSI) Grant in early 2022. The funding was allocated to schools and hospitals to create defensible space for added protection for their facilities in a wildfire.

The DSI Grant, a one-time \$1,000 grant available to any Oregon public or private school, university, or hospital, or \$5,000 per school district, encouraged applicants to improve their vegetative landscaping and maintain defensible space. In total, the OSFM allocated \$271,000 in DSI grants. The OSFM funded 261 school sites across 123 school organizations (school district, college, or private school) and ten (10) hospitals.

OREGON FIRE SERVICE CAPACITY PROGRAM

The Oregon Fire Service Capacity Program is for small- to medium-sized fire agencies that need more funding for permanent positions for firefighters and fire prevention.

This competitive \$12 million grant was available to Oregon's local fire districts and departments, which could apply for funds to support up to two firefighters and two fire prevention personnel; or a combination of both. The application period for this competitive grant closed on November 30, 2022. Applications are under review at the time of this report.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM

The Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant is a competitive \$18 million opportunity open to local governments, including special districts, structural fire service agencies, and non-governmental organizations. This is the largest grant fund OSFM has made available for community preparedness activities in the agency's history. Those eligible can apply for wildfire risk reduction projects, equipment, and program staff to support local efforts. The projects funded by this grant will help protect people, property, and communities from wildfire through risk reduction programs. In addition, these efforts will better prepare communities for wildfire impacts and create a more fire-adapted Oregon. The application period for this grant will close on January 31, 2023.

"We were really excited to get this project done. Although it's a small project, we were able to remove shrubs that were up against the building and replace them with hardscape rock and stone as well as some small softscaping items that were planted 5' or further from the building and will stay small in stature."

Grande Ronde
Academy



WILDFIRE SEASON SUCCESSES AND COSTS

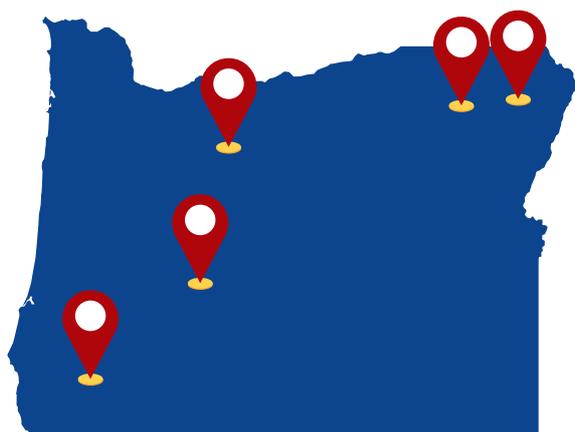
During the 2022 wildfire season, Oregon saw continued success with wildfire response tools funded through Senate Bill 762. This is the second year the OSFM has had the ability to mobilize resources outside of a formal conflagration declaration through pre-positioning (placing firefighting equipment and personnel in high-risk areas for brief periods of high fire danger) and immediate response (sending equipment and personnel to growing wildfires). Strategic use of pre-positioning and immediate response helped stop fires while they were small and kept them away from communities.

Between July 2 and September 14, the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System (OFMAS) supported 11 incidents through immediate response, pre-positioned five times, and responded to five declared conflagrations. Four of the pre-positioned task forces responded to emerging fires very quickly and kept those fires within manageable footprints without increased state involvement.

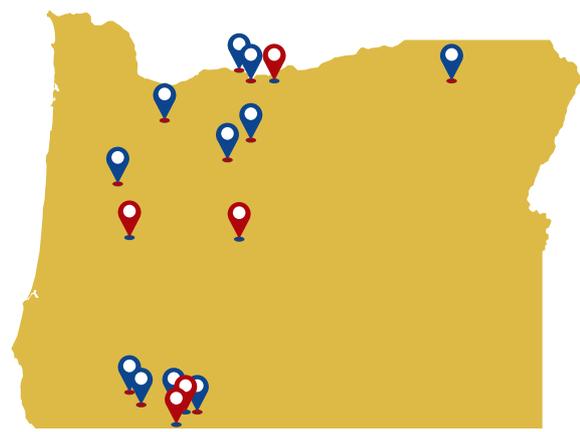
The Senate Bill 762 funds allowed the OSFM to bolster capacity ahead of the anticipated east wind event in September 2023, which ultimately led to two immediate responses and a declared conflagration for the Cedar Creek Fire, as it grew to within a few miles of Oakridge.

2022 FIRE SEASON TOTALS

With five emergency conflagrations, total fire season costs are estimated to be \$12.9 million. These large fire costs are funded by mostly state funds and a single federal FEMA grant program (FMAG) when applicable. In recent years, this federal grant has become more challenging to apply for and receive due to changing application criteria at the national level. The total expended from Senate Bill 762 funds was approximately \$1.8 million for wildfire suppression tools, including pre-positioning and immediate response.



2022 CONFLAGRATIONS



📍 PRE-POSITIONING ASSIGNMENT
📍 IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Continuing these wildfire initiatives and programs will be vital in the 2023-2025 biennium as Oregon continues to face challenging wildfire seasons, significant expansion of the wildland-urban interface, and a growing population requiring services the OSFM provides.

The OSFM recommends that the Oregon Legislature considers durable funding for its wildfire initiatives and programs.

- Fire Adapted Oregon which empowers wildfire community preparedness, fosters relationships to encourage local fire prevention and educational capacity, and educates Oregonians on mitigating their risk to life and property loss in the event of a wildfire.
- Response Ready Oregon focused on protecting Oregonians through bolstered and effective emergency response, including fire service capacity, pre-positioning, immediate response tools, and equipment.
- Financial and staffing capacity for the second-in-the-nation statewide defensible space program targeted at vegetation management around high-risk homes in the wildland-urban interface to increase survivability.
- Sustainable and durable funding for large fires in Oregon.

The one-time funding in Senate Bill 762 supported Oregon and the fire service by creating solutions to growing challenges such as staffing capacity and increased wildfire risk to community members. In addition, the funds created the impetus for statewide grants to address wildfire preparedness for landowners and response tools for the fire service. As wildfires increase in size, frequency, and duration, Oregon experiences an increase in risk and costs associated with preparedness, response, and recovery. The existing programs at OSFM will require sustainable support for its proactive wildfire approaches to response and preparedness.



OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

www.oregon.gov/osp/sfm